

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 BELGRADE 8320

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, YO, US
SUBJECT: FRIEND OR FOE?: THE YUGOSLAV PERCEPTION OF THE UNITED
STATES

REF: BELGRADE 1725 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: FROM AND AMERICAN STANDPOINT, THE MOST
IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTIC OF YUGOSLAVIA IS ITS RELATIVE
INDEPENDENCE FROM MOSCOW. AMERICANS CONCEIVE OF THEM-
SELVES AS ALLIES OF THE YUGOSLAVS IN MAINTAINING THAT
INDEPENDENCE. YUGOSLAVIA'S COMMUNIST ELITE, HOWEVER,
HAS A MUCH MORE COMPLEX ATTITUDE TOWARD THE U.S. IT IS
BASED ON MARXISM, NON-ALIGNMENT, ETHNOCENTRISM, BALKAN
PARANOIA AND A BLEND OF MISINFORMATION AND HARD FACTS.
YUGOSLAVIA'S LEADERS FEEL THREATENED NOT ONLY BY
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SOVIET IMPERIALISM, BUT ALSO BY WESTERN-INSPIRED
COUNTER-REVOLUTION AND WESTERN-BACKED NATIONALISM.
THEY VIEW THE UNITED STATES MORE AS FOE THAN FRIEND
AND TEND TO TAKE FOR GRANTED OUR CONTRIBUTION TO
THEIR SECURITY AND ECONOMIC WELL-BEING. A NUMBER OF
THEIR PERCEPTIONS ARE DISTORTED, STEMMING FROM THEIR OWN

IDEOLOGICAL PRECONCEPTIONS. AT THE SAME TIME, THE YUGOSLAV LEADERSHIP DOES NOT ERR IN SEEING US AS ADVERSARIES ON A WIDE RANGE OF ISSUES AND WE MUST EXPECT A CONTINUATION OF BASIC SUSPICION AND FRICTION FROM WHICH WE SHOULD NOT RECOIL. END SUMMARY.

2. WHEN CROATIAN NATIONALIST HIJACKED A TWA PLANE IN SEPTEMBER, STATEMENTS LIKE THESE WERE COMMON IN THE CONTROLLED YUGOSLAV PRESS: --"(THE HIJACKING) REVEALS AN UNDERGROUND PLOT BETWEEN MERCENARIES OF YUGOSLAV ORIGIN AND INFLUENTIAL REACTIONARY MAGNATES ACROSS THE ATLANTIC ...--(THE HIJACKERS) HAVE OBTAINED AN INFLUENTIAL AND POWERFUL MASTER IN CERTAIN AMERICAN CIRCLES, WHICH USE THEM AS THEIR WEAPON IN ACTION AGAINST SOCIALIST AND NON-ALIGNED YUGOSLAVIA,--(THE HIJACKING) IS JUST ONE IN A SERIES OF CAREFULLY PLANNED ANTI-YUGOSLAV ACTS CONCEIVED IN CERTAIN VERY POWERFUL AND VERY INFLUENTIAL CIRCLES."

3. SUCH ACCUSATIONS CLASH SO SEVERELY WITH OUR OWN IMAGE OF THE UNITED STATES AND OF ITS ATTITUDE TOWARD YUGOSLAVIA THAT WE MUST ASK HOW THEY COULD BE MADE. ARE THE YUGOSLAVS TRYING TO FOSTER DOMESTIC UNITY BY CREATING IMAGINARY DANGERS FROM ABROAD? ARE THEY TRYING TO "BALANCE" THEIR OCCASIONALLY CONTENTIOUS STATEMENTS ABOUT THE SOVIET UNION? OR DO THEY REALLY BELIEVE THAT "REACTIONARY CIRCLES" IN THE U.S. ARE MOUNTING AN ANTI-YUGOSLAV CAMPAIGN, USING EMIGRE TERRORISTS AS ONE INSTRUMENT? SUCH A VIEW OF AMERICAN BEHAVIOR IS USEFUL TO THE LEADERSHIP SINCE NO DISTINCTION IS DRAWN BETWEEN VIOLENT AND ILLEGAL

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ACTIVITIES YUGOSLAV EMIGRES ABROAD ON THE ONE HAND, AND LEGAL ANTI-COMMUNIST POLITICAL ACTIVITY WHICH THE YUGOSLAV LEADERSHIP REGARDS AS EQUALLY OR PERHAPS EVEN MORE THREATENING. BUT, AS STRANGE AS IT MAY SEEM TO THOUGHTFUL AMERICANS, THERE ARE A NUMBER OF INDICATIONS THAT MANY YUGOSLAV COMMUNISTS SINCERELY BELIEVE WHAT THEY SAY. AN AMERICAN STUDYING HERE FINDS THAT HIS STUDENT FRIENDS WHO BELONG TO THE LEAGUE OF COMMUNISTS ALL BELIEVE THAT THE CIA WAS BEHIND THE HIJACKING. FSFA DIRECTOR FOR NORTH AMERICAN AFFAIRS SAYS HE IS CONVINCED FBI EITHER ORGANIZED HIJACKING OR KNEW ABOUT IT IN ADVANCE. HOW CAN INFLUENTIAL, SERIOUS YUGOSLAVS REACH THESE CONCLUSIONS?

4. AMERICANS TEND TO VIEW YUGOSLAVIA PRIMARILY IN TERMS OF ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION. WE SEE OUR MAIN ROLE AS ASSISTING THE YUGOSLAVS TO MAINTAIN THEIR INDEPENDENCE FROM MOSCOW, PARTICULARLY AFTER TITO. WE EXPECT THE YUGOSLAVS TO SEE US AS A FRIEND.

5. WHILE MANY YUGOSLAV "MEN IN THE STREET" MAY HAVE THIS VIEW OF BENIGN UNITED STATES, YUGOSLAVIA'S COMMUNIST ELITE HAS A MUCH MORE COMPLEX VIEW OF OUR RELATIONSHIP. WHILE THEY CREDIT US WITH SOME USEFULNESS IN KEEPING THE RUSSIANS OFF THEIR BACKS, AS MARXISTS AND LEADERS OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT, WITH AN ETHNO-CENTRIC BALKAN MENTALITY, AN UNSOPHISTICATED UNDERSTANDING OF THE UNITED STATES, AND EVEN SOME FACTUAL JUSTIFICATION, THIS ELITE SUSPECTS OUR INTENTIONS AND FEARS US AS A THREAT, DIFFERENT IN NATURE BUT PERHAPS EVEN GREATER THAN MOSCOW.

6. YUGOSLAVIA'S POLITICAL LEADERS ARE MARXISTS. THEY ARE CREATIVE AND HAVE MODIFIED MARXIST DOGMA AS UNDERSTOOD IN THE SOVIET UNION, BUT THEY MAINTAIN THEIR MARXIST VIEW OF THE WORLD. MARXISM HAS NOT BEEN IMPOSED ON THEM FROM ABROAD AS IT HAS BEEN ELSEWHERE IN EASTERN

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EUROPE: THEY CHOSE IT ON THEIR OWN. IN 1948 IT WAS STALIN WHO REJECTED TITO AND NOT VICE VERSA. YUGOSLAV COMMUNISTS RESIST SOVIET HEGEMONY, BUT NOT COMMUNISM, AND A BUST OF LENIN IS POSITIONED AS PROMINENTLY AS TITO'S PORTRAIT IN THE LOBBY OF THE LEAGUE OF COMMUNISTS BUILDING.

7. THE YUGOSLAVS RECENTLY SPONSORED A CONFERENCE ON "SOCIALISM IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD" FOR SOCIALISTS AND COMMUNISTS FROM MANY COUNTRIES, INCLUDING THE SOVIET UNION. WHILE SENIOR YUGOSLAV OFFICIALS (BAKARIC, GRILICKOV AND DUSAN POPOVIC) DENOUNCED THE IMPOSITION OF ANY ONE MODEL FOR SOCIALIST STATES, THEY EXPRESSED STATEMENTS LIKE THESE:

--"PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE REPRESENTS THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL FRAMEWORK WITHIN WHICH THE CLASS STRUGGLE IS BEING CARRIED ON...MARXISM IS THE ONLY POSSIBLE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 BELGRADE 8320

THEORY WHICH CAN OFFER A TRUE PERCEPTION OF HISTORICAL
TRENDS...THE HISTORY OF THE 20TH CENTURY HAS CON-
FIRMED THE THINKING OF MARX, ENGELS AND LENIN."

8. FROM THEIR MARXIST FAITH YUGOSLAV COMMUNISTS DERIVE
CERTAIN PRECONCEPTIONS ABOUT THE NATURE OF CAPITALISM
(AND THE U.S.). THEY BELIEVE IN THE INEVITABLE SOCIALIST
TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORLD AND THE DECLINE OF CAPITALISM.
THE YUGOSLAV ELITE VIEWS CAPITALISM AS CORRUPT--WEALTHY,
BUT DECAYING. LCY SECRETARY FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
GRICKOV HAS SAID THAT THE CRISIS OF CAPITALISM IS NOT
SO MUCH ECONOMIC AS SOCIAL, ETHICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL.
AN INFLUENTIAL AMERICANOLOGIST FROM THE INSTITUTE FOR
INTERNATIONAL POLICS AND ECONOMICS SEES VIETNAM,
WATERGATE AND OUR RECESSION AS THE FIRST STAGE OF THE
MORAL CRISIS WHICH WILL IN SEVERAL DECADES FPRFOUNDLY
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RADICALIZE AMERICA. EVEN WESTERN FILMS SHOWN HERE ARE
SELECTED TO DEMONSTRATE THE GRAVE PROBLEMS AFFLICTING
CAPITALIST SOCIETY. YUGOSLAVIA'S LEADERS RESPECT OUR
ECONOMIC POWER AND TECHNOLOGY, BUT THEY DO NOT ADMIRE OUR
SOCIAL SYSTEM. THEY SEE IT AS A THREATENING ALTERNATIVE
TO THEIR MORE "MORAL" SOCIALIST SOCIETY. POLITICALLY,
THEY CANNOT FAIL TO APPRECIATE THAT LIBERAL DEMOCRACY
IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH THEIR OWN ONE-PARTY RULE. FURTHER-
MORE, THEY BELIEVE A MULTI-PARTY SYSTEM COULD DESTROY
THE MULINATIONAL YUGOSLAV FEDERATION IF IT CAUSED THE
FORMATION OF PARTIES BASED ON NATIONALITY.

9. THEIR IDEOLOGY TEACHES THEM THAT CAPITALISM IS INHERENTLY HOSTILE TO SOCIALISM, EVEN YUGOSLAV SOCIALISM. BY THEIR LIGHTS, CAPITALISM WILL TRY TO IMPOSE COUNTER-REVOLUTION, OF WHICH BLUE JEANS AND POP MUSIC COULD BE JUST THE FIRST SIGNS. CRITICISM OF YUGOSLAVIA IN THE WESTERN PRESS OVER HUMAN RIGHTS AND OTHER MATTERS CONFIRMS THIS PRECONCEPTION, AND A YUGOSLAV OFFICIAL HAS TOLD EMBASSY OFFICERS THAT THE SOVIETS ARGUE CONSTANTLY THAT THE WEST IS HOSTILE TO THE YUGOSLAV SOCIAL SYSTEM.

10. YUGOSLAVS NOT ONLY SEE THE U.S. DEFENDING CAPITALISM AGAINST SOCIALISM BUT LEADING THE FORCES OF IMPERIALISM IN DOMINATING THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. PERCEPTIONS OF THE U.S. ROLE HERE ARE ALSO HEAVILY COLORED BY MARXISM. THE YUGOSLAVS SEE THE THIRD WORLD AS THE PROLETARIAT OF NATIONS, STRUGGLING TO LIBERATE ITSELF FROM THE EXISTING SYSTEM OF EXPLOITATION BY THE DEVELOPED WORLD. THEY REGARD THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT AS THE VANGUARD OF THIS GLOBAL CLASS STRUGGLE, WHICH THEY BELIEVE FURTHERS THE ADVANCE OF SOCIALISM AS WELL AS THE INTERESTS OF THE LDC'S.

11. AS MARXISTS AND LEADERS OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT, THEREFORE, THE YUGOSLAVS PERCEIVE THE U.S. AS AN OPPONENT.
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THEIR SUSPICIONS ARE HEIGHTENED BY AN EXAGGERATED VIEW OF THEIR IMPORTANCE IN THE WORLD. INTERNATIONALLY, THEY VIEW THEMSELVES PRIMARILY AS LEADERS OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT. CONSTANT PAEANS TO ITS SUCCESS AND IMPORTANCE HAVE GIVEN YUGOSLAV AN EXAGGERATED SENSE OF SELF-IMPORTANCE, AND THEY TEND TO SEE UNRELATED EVENTS AS BEING DESIGNED TO INFLUENCE THEM. THE "SONNENFELDT DOCTRINE" LEAK IN THEIR VIEW WAS LARGELY AN ATTEMPT TO INFLUENCE THEIR NON-ALIGNED FOREIGN POLICY BY IMPLICITLY THREATENING THE YUGOSLAVS WITH "DELIVERY" TO THE SOVIET SPHERE OF INFLUENCE.

12. IN ADDITION, THE YUGOSLAV ELITE IS INFLUENCED BY TRADITIONAL, SMALL-STATE BALKAN PARANOIA ENGENDERED BY CENTURIES OF INSECURITY, FOREIGN INVASION, ANTAGONISM BETWEEN NATIONALITIES AND A SEVERE CULTURAL INFERIORITY COMPLEX VIS-A-VIS THE WEST. THEY CHARACTERISTICALLY LOOK FOR HIDDEN PLOTS BEHIND EVENTS AND MOVE IN DEVIIOUS WAYS THEMSELVES. THEY FEAR A YALTA-TYPE AGREEMENT IN WHICH THE SUPER POWERS WOULD DIVIDE YUGOSLAVIA BETWEEN THEM, WITH CROATIA AND SLOVENIA GOING TO THE WEST. THAT FEAR MAY BE STOKED BY THEIR OWN RECOGNITION THAT YUGOSLAV POLICY IS FUNDAMENTALLY OPPOSED TO AMERICAN INTERESTS AROUND THE WORLD AND THEY MAY WELL PROJECT ON

TO US WHAT THEY WOULD DO IN THE SAME POSITION.

13. MARXISM, NON-ALIGNMENT, ETHNOCENTRISM AND BALKAN PARANOIA ALL ACCOUNT FOR PART OF THEIR OUTLOOK TOWARDS THE UNITED STATES. THEY ARE ALSO, HOWEVER, INFLUENCED BY OBJECTIVE FACTS--SUCH AS OUR STIFF DEMARCHE ABOUT SOVIET OVERLIGHTS TO ANGOLA AND PRESSURE TO OBTAIN THE RELEASE OF LASZLO TOTH FROM PRISON. THEY REMEMBER EVENTS WHICH AMERICANS TEND TO FORGET:
--THE UNITED STATES SUPPORTED THE ANTI-COMMUNIST CHETNHCKS DURING THE EARLY YEARS OF WORLD WAR II--
FOR TOO LONG IN THE COMMUNIST VIEW.
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--THE UNITED STATES HELPED PUSH THE YUGOSLAVS OUT OF TRIESTE AT THE END OF THE WAR.
--WAR CRIMINALS LIKE ANDREI ARTUKOVIC AND ANTI-COMMUNIST EMIGRES FROM YUGOSLAVIA FOUND REFUGE IN THE UNITED STATES.
--THE UNITED STATES IS A CENTER OF EMIGRE OPPOSITION TO THE TITO REGIME AND 95 PERCENT OF ALL "HOSTILE" EMIGRES ARE IN THE WEST.
--MANY TERRORIST ACTS HAVE BEEN COMMITTED AGAINST YUGOSLAV DIPLOMATS AND PROPERTY IN THE UNITED STATES, AND PERPETRATORS HAVE NEVER BEEN PUNISHED.

14. THEY SEE THE UNITED STATES AS THE KEY NATION RESISTING THIRD WORLD DEMANDS. THEY ALSO SEE THE CONTINUED STRENGTH OF ANTI-COMMUNIST SENTIMENT IN THE UNITED STATES--IN THE "DESTABILIZATION" OF ALLENDE'S CHILE AND RESISTANCE TO EURO-COMMUNISM, FOR EXAMPLE.

15. WHILE THEY HAVE A CERTAIN OBJECTIVE BASIS TO SUPPORT THEIR VIEW OF THE UNITED STATES, AT THE SAME TIME THE YUGOSLAV ELITE IS NOT SOPHISTICATED ABOUT THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM AND OFTEN FAILS TO UNDERSTAND ITS BASIC FEATURES. "AMERICANOLOGISTS", LIKE FORMER AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES BOGDAN CRNOBRNJA, ARE FEW AND USUALLY FAR FROM POWER. THOSE IN POWER OFTEN DISPLAY A CRUDE

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"VILLAGE MENTALITY" IN THE WORDS OF ONE CRITICAL YUGOSLAV OFFICIAL. YUGOSLAVIA'S LEADERS TEND TO PROJECT THEIR OWN SYSTEM ON OUR COUNTRY, WHICH FEW OF THEM HAVE VISITED. IN PARTICULAR, THEY THINK THAT IF THE SDB AND SUP IN A BACKWARD COUNTRY WITH ONE-TENTH THE POPULATION OF U.S. CAN ASSASSINATE OPPONENTS AND ARREST AND EXERT ENFLUENCE AT WILL, THEN THE FBI AND CIA MUST BE TEN TIMES MORE EFFICIENT AND POWERFUL. THEY CANNOT GRASP RESTRAINTS ON OUR POLICE. THEY ASSUME THAT THE PRESS IS CENTRALLY CONTROLLED AND REGARD STORIES ON POSSIBLE POST-TITO INSTABILITY AS A USG-INSPIRED ATTEMPT TO CREATE INSTABILITY. IN GENERAL, THEY ASSUME THAT OUR SOCIETY IS AS SUBJECT TO BEHIND-THE-SCENES MANIPULATION AS THEIRS.

16. YUGOSLAVIA'S LEADERS DO NOT IGNORE THE U.S. CONTRIBUTION TO THEIR SECURITY, BUT THEY GENERALLY TAKE US
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FOR GRANTED. THEY BELIEVE THAT THE U.S. IS COMPELLED BY ITS INTERESTS TO SUPPORT THEM AGAINST MOSCOW, BUT IN MOMENTS OF CRISIS OR PRESSURE THEIR LATENT FEAR SURFACES THAT WE MIGHT USE THEM AS A BARGAINING CHIP WITH THE SOVIETS IN SOME LARGER DEAL OR JOIN WITH THE SOVIETS IN DIVIDING YUGOSLAVIA. THEY RECOGNIZE THAT A BALANCE OF POWER BETWEEN EAST AND WEST IS BENEFICIAL TO THEM, AND KARDELJ HAS SAID THAT A SUDDEN SHIFT IN THE BALANCE WOULD BE VERY DANGEROUS BUT THEY WANT TO MOVE TO A NON-BLOC EUROPE TO INCREASE THEIR OWN INFLUENCE.

17. IN SPITE OF WHAT WESTERNERS SEE AS A CLEAR THREAT TO YUGOSLAVIA FROM THE EAST, THE GOY NEVERTHELESS RELIES HEAVILY ON SOVIET ARMS. IN SPITE OF THE WESTERN FEELING THAT NATO IS ON YUGOSLAVIA'S SIDE, A RECENT NEWSPAPER ARTICLE DESCRIBED U.S. BASES IN GREECE AS "COLONIAL." EVEN IN PRIVATE, YUGOSLAVS USUALLY REFUSE TO SPECIFY THE USSR AS THEIR MOST LIKELY INVADER. THEY STRESS SELF-RELIANCE AND THE FORCE OF WORLD OPINION AS THEIR DEFENSIVE ASSETS AGAINST ANY AGGRESSOR, NOT MEN OR ARMS WHICH THE WEST MIGHT FURNISH.

18. THE COMMUNIST LEADERS OF YUGOSLAVIA REGARD THE U.S. AS STILL THE MOST TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED NATION, BUT ALSO AS THE LEADER OF DECAYING CAPITALISM, THE IMPERIALISTIC EXPLOITER OF THE THIRD WORLD, AND THE ENEMY OF COMMUNISM AND NON-ALIGNMENT. THEY SUSPECT OUR INTENTIONS AND CONSIDER US AS MUCH IF NOT MORE THREAT IN OUR OWN RIGHT AS AN ALLY AGAINST THE THREAT THEY FACE FROM THE EAST.

19. ELEMENTS OF THE YUGOSLAV PERCEPTION OF THE UNITED STATES ARE DISTORTED. WE CAN TAKE CERTAIN STEPS TO MINIMIZE MISUNDERSTANDING. WE CAN ORIENT OUR INFORMATION ACTIVITIES TO DEMONSTRATE THE STRENGTH AND DYNAMISM OF AMERICAN SOCIETY AND THUS CORRECT THE YUGOSLAV STEREOTYPE.
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WE CAN COMPLAIN WHEN THE YUGOSLAV PRESS PROPAGATES A DISTORTED IMAGE OF THE UNITED STATES. WE CAN BRING SENIOR PEOPLE IN POLITICS TO THE UNITED STATES TO GIVE THEM A MORE SOPHISTICATED VIEW OF AMERICA. DOMESTICALLY, WE CAN MORE EFFECTIVELY PROTECT YUGOSLAV DIPLOMATS AND GOY PROPERTY FROM EMIGRE TERRORISM.

20. BUT FUNDAMENTAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS WILL NEVERTHELESS PERSIST. WHEN FORMULATING POLICY SEE REFTEL A. WE MUST BE AWARE OF THEM AS WELL AS THOSE YUGOSLAV PERCEPTIONS OF THE U.S. WHICH ARE ACCURATE. WE MAY SHARE WITH THE YUGOSLAVS A DESIRE TO KEEP BELGRADE INDEPENDENT OF MOSCOW, BUT OUR INTERESTS CLASH OVER THE SPREAD OF WORLD COMMUNISM, THE CREATION OF A NEW INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER, AND MANY OTHER QUESTIONS. THE LEADERS OF THIS SMALL, STILL RELATIVELY BACKWARD COMMUNIST AND NON-ALIGNED STATE PERHAPS SEE THE ADVERSARY ASPECTS OF OUR RELATIONSHIP MORE CLEARLY THAN DO AMERICANS. FRICTION AND SUSPICION WILL BE AN INEVITABLE PART OF OUR COMPETITION, EVEN IF WE SUCCEED IN REDUCING SOME OF THE UNFOUNDED DISTORTIONS IN THE YUGOSLAV VIEW OF THE U.S.
SILBERMAN

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